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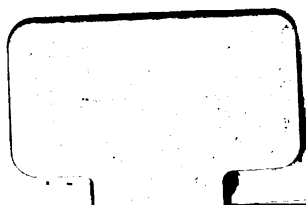




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THE
LAST OF THE SOPHIS.

E. S.H. 1032.

THE
LAST OF THE SOPHIS.

—
A POEM.
—

BY
C. F. HENNINGSEN,
A Minor.

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116.

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ARGUMENT OF THE POEM.

MANDANO, last of the royal line of Sophi, or Sephi, being driven from Persia by the usurper Nadir, takes refuge among the Daghistan Tartars, attains a high rank in their tribe, and becomes enamoured of Zuleyda the daughter of the chief. Nadir, or Kouli-Khan, having conquered the rest of Asia, turns his arms against the hordes of Daghistan; and the council think it more prudent to defer Mandano's marriage with Zuleyda, until he shall have proved his fidelity to them against his invading countrymen. A Dervise of the sect of Ali, old and infirm, seeks refuge with them, from the persecution of the Persian tyrant; which is readily granted.

At sunset in the garden of a Kiosque, Zuleyda is to meet her lover, and the Dervise availing himself of the opportunity, comes to offer her the magic flowers his art has drawn from other regions; but on perceiving the Persian prince hastening to the rendezvous, throwing aside his disguise, he bears her to a steed, which is concealed in the brushwood, and flies—Pursuit and death of Zerda—Advance of the Persian army unopposed through the desert, until a guide offering to conduct them to the retreat of the Tartars, they take their way through

the passes of Assan—Treachery of the guide—Ambuscade of the Tartars, and destruction of the army—The Sophi pursues a band retreating to the shore, and hears the shrieks of his betrothed bride, above the din of carnage—The line of the fugitives is broken, and Mandano beholds her in the arms of her ravisher—But the Dervise, unable to retain his prize longer, leaves her a corpse in the arms of the conqueror. At that moment the guards close around him, proclaiming him aloud the Khan of Persia—The Sophi pursues the murderer across the desert, but in vain—A fever keeps him several days confined in a solitary cavern—Taking a solemn vow of vengeance, he enters his native country—His feelings on retracing the scenes of his infancy—On his road over a mountain he perceives a train encircling its base, and his eye distinguishes at a distance the usurper of Persia—He seeks him when awaiting alone the beasts of the forest—They meet—The skill of Mandano prevails, his adversary is slain, and he flies—His steed dies from fatigue on the way, but he gains the scene of his misfortune—The tribe have removed further northward—He finds the solitary cell of a hermit—His tale—His sorrows, and the conclusion.

As a Russian traveller was wandering on the borders of the Caspian sea, he was somewhat astonished at hearing the sounds of music, an unusual thing in the wild and desert parts his footsteps were now treading. As it seemed to proceed from the edge of the rock, he advanced lightly on tiptoe, and perceived an aged man in the garb of a gylong—a kind of monk, or solitary hermit of the country, beguiling his weary hours, in improvising to a rude instrument something resembling a lyre, the wars of the Daghistan Tartars. He would have listened in silence, but a little wolf-dog, till now unobserved, pricked up its ears, and by his shrill bark informed his master of the intrusion of a stranger. He turned and gazed on the Russian without any demonstration of surprise or curiosity. He was of the middle size; a long white beard descended to his girdle, his countenance beamed with animation, although the traces of many summers sat on his wrinkled brows. "I had gazed on him a few seconds (proceeds the Russian), when he broke our mutual silence, by courteously asking me if the humble dwelling of a gylong could offer hospitality to a stranger? After expressing my thanks, I assured him, that I was in want of nothing, but begged of him to proceed with his song. After some hesitation, and many entreaties, although the Asiatics have rarely much *mauvaise honte*, he tuned his many-stringed instrument. 'My son! it is but rarely (said he) that a living creature interrupts my lonely meditations. I recollect the time when these hills and valleys were covered by the

innumerable tents of a tribe of which there are none perhaps but myself existing, and for years have I amused myself in the melancholy pleasure of retracing the sorrows of others on my lyre: if it can be any to you, young as you are, you are welcome to share it, and listen to the rude song, that has hitherto been unheard, except by the lonely rocks: what I sing is not the phantasy of the brain; would that it were! Hearken then to a tale that happened when the great sultan was driven from our rocks. I was nursed by the cradle, and strewed flowers on the grave, of her of whom I will tell thee.' There was a something earnest in his dark eyes, and yet, I know not why, at first I thought it a mere prelude to his oriental minstrelsy. Having whistled back his dog, who had strayed across the road on the scent of some animal, he bent on his instrument, and began with sounds, wild and immeasurable, yet harmonious as the tone of the Æolian harp.

THE

LAST OF THE SOPHIS.

LIGHT plays the breeze o'er the Caspian sea,
And the dark blue waves roll wild and free,
They sparkle awhile in the morning ray,
Then dark'ning to purple they dance away;
And who could gaze upon that wave,
Nor think one moment of the grave?
Ah! who has marked those ripples breaking,
And gazed, alas! without awaking—
Nor thought, as those light billows flow,
Life's sparkling hour is fleeting so?
And yonder, rising from the shore,
The distant rocks hang wildly o'er,
With many a tuft of stunted trees,
The sport of every playful breeze
That sweeps athwart those silent seas,
And hills in distance, less and less,
Are lost amid that wilderness;

Save one, whose snowy brow on high
Seems mingled with the cloudless sky,
And dimly fades from earth away,
Unless where far the eastern ray
Hath set its tinge of brighter day,
And one might sit, and gazing here,
Give not a thought on what one were,
Or wish to be a denizen
For ever from the haunts of men ;—
And thus, to let our thought take wings
Away from earth, and dream of things
More fair, than if reality
Were stamped on what can never be—
Is happiness to such as me,
To whom the world is but a thing,
Hath neither frown, nor smile, nor sting
To bind me in its spells ;
For thus, when deep oblivion dwells
O'er soul and sense, the heart may steal
An hour, a single hour's repeal
From sorrows it is doomed to feel.
Yet why so soon, that passing dream,
That momentary Lethe's stream?
And why so sudden must they break,
And we to wayward fate awake?
To wish, perhaps, to sleep for ever,
On what should e'er have been, or never!

Here a considerable pause ensued, not in the song of the Tartar Minstrel, but the wind, which rose and mingled its hoarse tones with his wild accompaniment. Now and then, as the storm subsided and the blast whistled with less violence through the ruins, an occasional passage might be heard, and gradually, as the agitated elements died away in the succeeding calm, his tale became audible and distinct. His air, too, was more animated as he ceased to touch the vibrating strings of his instrument; and though traces of decay and age were stamped on his visage, it was easy to mark the tale as something more than the mere romance of an Oriental.

Thus ran the Lay of the untutored Son of the Desert:—

I.

I long had paused—my lonely lyre
Had ceased to swell to notes of fire,
For age, with cold pervading chill,
Had passed upon its magic thrill.
But come! again thy murmuring chord
Must sing that vanished desert horde,
And lend thy melody, to tell
A tale o'er which I've loved to dwell,
Till every sound that left thy strings
Was soft as that the west wind brings
From Eden, on its airy wings.
It was the earliest morning hour,
That dawning down o'er rocky tower,
And minaret and pinnacle,

The gazer's eye might form at will,
Mid masses rude, round every hill,
As if those fairy things had laid
The shapeless rocks around the glade,
And each in wild confusion strewed—
To mimic man—in playful mood :
And as the wave rolled clear and still,
The mist rode o'er it thick and chill,
In distant clouds above it twining,
As if to hide the bright orb shining,
And yet in vain the flashes play
With many a mingled tint and ray,
As if within that deep sunshine
The trace of something more divine
Were left, and that it seemed to say,
Thus, through the mist of earth and clay—
The soul will mix with brighter day !

II.

Far o'er the flashing waters, mark
The Tartar's homeward-veering bark,
Which dash to dash above that sea
Darts like the wild swan merrily,
And shoots, beneath the skilful hand,
Like sea-bird to the distant land ;
But he must struggle hard as yet
Who guides it, ere his foot is set

On shore, for breaking round the bay,
Where many a rock projecting lay,
High dashed the shivered waves in spray,—
An instant, and the stranger drew,
With stalwart arm, his frail canoe
The danger of the breakers through,
And moored it in a silent creek,
That fitted well such light caïque.
Both slight was he, of make and form,
Yet dusk-like hues before the storm,
When mingled dark and light on high,
Sweep slowly changing o'er the sky,
His raven eye glanced full and free,
And yet it spoke all haughtily,
When glancing through those long silk lashes—
As lightning through the forest dashes,—
Dark too his brow, and mingled there
Were passion's furrowing hues of care,
And high adventure in his air.
Too haughty he for Tartar race
In mien, and features of the face ;
His eye more wild, his glance more bold,
Had deemed them else of Persian mould.

III.

Last now was he of Sophi's line !
Last of that lineage deemed divine,

When far, of old, his fathers spread
Their name in terror, and in dread;
But thus mankind are ever placed,
When high in fortune—and abased,
The falling star is soon effaced.
Those who usurped his father's throne,
His father's empire, and his own,
Had sent them forth by fire and sword,
To seek, amid a Tartar horde,
The proffered shelter from the grave,
Which not the monarch's empire gave.
Wide spread the desert's far extent,
When first the infant Sophi went
To seek, amid its solitude,
Or wandering tribes more wild and rude,
His safety—or his death, from those
That happier times had deemed his foes.
Not long his fiery spirit dwelt
Thus lonely, hidden and unfelt:
He who the lion's cub hath torn,
And far from lair and forest borne,
Can never from its blood efface
The struggling passions of his race;
Thus scarce his earliest years of youth
Had passed away, 'mid tribes uncouth,
When far from herds and pasturage
He led them, ceaseless war to wage,

With reckless heart and iron hand,
Against the borders of a land
Where long of old his fathers reigned.
It boots but little how he gained
Ascendancy; the highest soul
Hath ever found, will keep control.
High sway he held, but was not long
A leader of the fearless throng :
Borne on the rapid wings of fame
The awe of conquering Nadir's name,
Whose terrors distance still increased,
Spread like a meteor through the east,
Sprung from a slave of low estate,
To tread the proudest heights of fate—
Like blasts, the offspring of a night,
That spread around their withering blight,
He mounted on a prostrate throne
That crime hath often won alone ;
Nor this without an effort gained,
His sovereign's blood had deeply stained,
Whose exiled race he had pursued
Until Carcassia's mountains rude
Had spread a welcome solitude ;
And now with many a Persian host
He came to track that Caspian coast.
The other side, alas ! had felt
The blows his wild ambition dealt,

A curse indeed by Allah sent,
His way was marked where'er he went
By blood and slaughter, as might tell
Full many a bloody annal well.

IV.

Fast homeward from Iskander bay,
The fearless chief one night and day,
Although the sky frowned stern and dark
Above the blue wave, steered his bark.
Light was his step when first he trod
Again Daghistan's friendly sod;
And yet the smile upon his brow,
The glance that beams beneath it now,
Is that for nightly danger done,
Or fight from hostile Tartar won?
No! he hath never feared the grave,
And mocks the billows as they rave,
Nor blood his damask blade has spilt,—
Unstained, unspotted to the hilt,
His ataghan is by his side;
But he is come to claim a bride,
A bride that hath been promised long—
But whither is the warrior throng
That, death devoted to their chief,
Are partners of his joy and grief?

The chief to dark Iskander's bay,
To cross alone, was sent away,
And from the struggling Usbecs know
What road was blighted by the foe.
It was not that they cared to hear
Where Kouli held his wild career,
If Persia's Khan were far, or near.
To meet the tyrant blade to blade,
Long, long was preparation made :
But that night 'mid the Tartar clan
Its chiefs held council in divan ;
It was of one—of foreign race,
Who long had fixed his dwelling place
Mid them, and stranger there, had won
Applause for many a bold deed done ;
And favour from a dark-eyed maid,
The fairest of her tribe, Zuleyd,
And daughter of their shiek :
As well her blushing brow and cheek
Might tell, for never were allied
Such mingled gentleness and pride.

V.

Long sat the warriors in debate—
The Sophis hereditary hate,
Though silent, now might be the same
As sparks beneath a vanished flame ;

Which dark and hidden, not subdued,
Might be by every blast renewed.
'T were well, perhaps, in border war
To wave the deadliest scymitar,
Mid tribes and provinces unknown,
Unheard-of by their very throne,
Who, nought of Persian but the name,
In all beside distinct might claim;
But when he came whose viper tongue
'T was said was deadly as his wrong,
A thousand things might gain or change—
“ A breast perhaps to freedom strange;
And better send him far away
From land, one passion might betray—
And one is said to linger yet
Where fortune's darkening clouds have set—
'T is one that dares him to forget
The home of other days.” * * —
But hark ! the chief himself is come.
They paused as Mandan trod the hall,
And all around was hushed and dumb,
Unless his footsteps' fall.
They gazed an instant on his form;
The high and noble brow,
Though often like the brooding storm
Was lit by sunshine now,—

They gazed, and none the silence broke,
Till rose the chief himself, and spoke :—
“ Sophi ! we’ve wronged thee—but, ’tis past,
That partial cloud, thy doom is cast,—
Gaze but one moment on his eye,
And tell me if a soul so high
Could bend, or stoop to treachery ?
No, warrior, though of monarch line,
May freedom’s hand be clasped by thine,—
Approach, Zuleyda from this hour,
Though some might bring her wealthier dower,
Is thine ! the poorest of our horde,
Whose noble heart, and good stout sword,
Far more in lady’s love I ween
Would weigh, than herds or pastures green,—
But pause an instant yet, and tell,
Lovest thou thy bride so well,
That thou wilt be a Renegade,
And spurn the land by tyrant swayed ?
For thou must wear the Tartar crest,
And sheath thy blade in Persian breast ;—
Henceforth, if joined to us, for ever
Thou and thy native land must sever,
Or think not of thy bride ! ”
The Sophi paused, and deeply sigh’d,
Then rose again his brow in pride,

'T were clear to mark the strife within,
Of passions struggling each to win :
He rose, nor human tongue can tell
The feelings that, unspeakable,
Were stamped upon the chieftain's brow.
Methinks I see him, even now,
The flashes on his hueless cheek,
Like lightning on the mountain's peak,
The throb of pain, the scorn of pride,
And all was dark'ning hate beside.

VI.

“ Well, be it so ! the lingering band
That bound me to my native land,
Is burst asunder,—and I stand
Her proudest, deadliest foe !
Let others prate of what we owe
To native clime, my native earth
I thank not even for my birth ;
That life she gave me but to be
Accursed by fortune's tyranny,
And bittered by the many wrongs
Whose memory now upon me throngs ;
My father's blood—but that shall fame
Wake like an echo to her name.
Yea, long my love hath taken wings
From her, the slayer of her kings,

And whose usurping leader now
Hath murder stamped upon his brow,
And comes, as if he could efface
That stain with blood of human race,
To add Daghistan's fall to those
Who crouched as slaves, or fell as foes.
No, through the wide world I would roam,
Like wind that knows no rest nor home,
To every impulse, so it bore
My footsteps farther from that shore;
Unless it were with sword and flame,
As foe to all her race and name
The injured son of Thamas came.
But I will stand with ye;—my bride
Shall be, my genius at my side;
Mid battle's crash and fearful yell,
That guardian image still shall dwell;
And then I reck not flame nor blade,
But rush—my battle-cry, Zuleyd!
And blood, I ween, the shore shall redden,
Or much these fiery veins must deaden;
Let death or victory's hour await
Ambitious deeds and deadly hate,
The star that fixed my destiny,
From me, shall never parted be.
Our home, the desert or the wave;
If conquered, we can share a grave,

Whose icy touch can never part,
 Nor coldly chill the lover's heart.
 Thus firm I stand, and Kouli Khan
 May urge his unavailing threat,
 I live, or die, with Daghistan,
 Where freedom lingers yet."

* * * * *

VII.

A Dervish is come from the Persian tent,
 To shelter himself in our armament,
 And his hair is grey, and his back is bent ;
 And his staff is split; his sandals are worn,
 And the garb he wears is old and torn ;
 And we give him shelter in hour of need,
 For he is no son of Omar's creed.
 The tyrant sought him, but he is flown,
 And none but Ali, the Dervish will own.
 "Then bring him food ; not flesh of the swine,
 But mountain kid, and sherbet, not wine ;
 And when he hath eaten, lead him to rest,—
 For saith the Koran, The giver is blessed."
 Thus Sadi spoke, each ready slave
 Waits till his master's arm shall wave :
 Then to the holy man they go,
 Who waits him in the hall below.

He little drinks, and eateth less ;
Nor bread, when broken, doth he bless,
But sits alone, in sullenness :—
At length he turned, and gazed around,
A prayer he prayed in unknown sound :
Then glanced again his piercing eye
Upon a slave, the nearest by.
“ Thy master hath a daughter fair ? ”
“ Fair as the snow the mountains wear,
And she is Sadi’s only care.”
“ Enough ! ” the holy man replies,
“ For sleep is settling on my eyes ;
Now leave me, let me take my rest.”
He wrapped him closer in his vest ;
Then laid him down upon the sod,
And cried, “ There is no god, but God ! ”

VIII.

Day’s last hour was fast declining,
I marked the star of evening shining,
The earth was moistened with the dew,
The gentle west wind lightly flew
Expanding on the eastern wave,
Which calm and placid as the grave,
Spread its waste of waters blue
Far as human eye could view,

Save where rippling, wild and bright,
They darted on the gazer's sight,
And the shadows dark and grey
Jutted forward on the bay.
There it lay, all glassy, clear
As the morning's earliest tear,
Such the zephyr softly sweeps
From the rose when Dian weeps ;
But there the shark will dart along,
Tyrant of the finny throng.
All on earth is linked with care ;
Thus the warblers of the air
Have the falcon, or the hawk,
Death 'mid loveliness will stalk—
And the tyrant Kouli Khan,
Hawk-like, darts o'er Daghistan.

* * * * *

IX.

Vales where all is peace around,
Self-wreathed chaplets spread thy ground,
Yet thy valley's whitest flower
Shall be blood-stained in that hour,
When he rushes with the brand,
Red with gore of many a land,
To plant upon thy mountain snows,
The creed and standard of thy foes.

X.

Thy youth are gathering in yon tower,
And revelling flies the festal hour;
Yet now the Dervish has left the feast
Long ere the hour of mirth hath ceased,
He hastens to yon lone kiosk,
That rises by the ruined mosque,
Which holds yet high and haughtily,
Resisting strife with Time's decree.
He came—he paused—"Ah! she is there,
I see her white robe float on air;
'Tis she! I marked her on the shore,
When here I passed a year before,
To * * * * *

The Dervish gazed a moment longer,
Then forward stepped and breathed the stronger,
He sigh'd—she turned her ivory brow—
"Ah! now a Dervish—what wilt thou?"
There was a gentle blush of fear,
Like eastern rose through Genii's tear,
Its crimson hues a moment shedding,
Like life, o'er chiselled marble spreading,
Soft as those earliest tints that break
When first the morning's rays awake,
And blush with warm, yet ceaseless glow,
On Assan's never fading snow.

Her eyes were large and hazel dark,
Her eyebrows like the rainbow's arc,
Her glance shot forth all wildly bright,
Yet mild as Dian's silvery light.
Her ringlets in their graceful flow,
Contrasting with her neck of snow,
Rolled blacker than the darkest plume
From wing of raven, bird of gloom ;
In her was fixed unspeakable
That nameless power, that fairy spell,
Whose rays round transient beauty dwell.

XI.

Dervish, away! what will'st thou here?
"Nay, lady fair, a moment hear :
I bear such drugs from India rare,
As well may claim a moment's care,
The seed of those lone flowers that give
The youth of Houris while we live,
Like springing ivy ever green:
For such, the royal Haram's queen
Had poured her store of gems and gold,
But Allah! they could not be sold
To one of Omar's hated creed,
Though all the mines of earth should bleed;
But thou may'st have the magic flowers
That grew in Eden's distant bowers,

And thus remain the loveliest one,
When fading beauty's race is run
Around thee, like the flower that yet
Remains where Simoom's curse is set."
She paused, with doubting look, yet mild,
For reader, know the desert's child,
Is like her native mountains wild,
And like that insect of an hour,
Will often feed on poisoned flow'r.
To doubt his powers, she deemed were weak,
Yet played a smile upon her cheek;
What! smile upon the holy man,
And doubt his magic talisman?
'T were worthy but of Christian creed,
Or hated Omar's rebel seed.
It could not be; and Sadi's daughter,
Like the swan on Caspia's water
Startled in the evening gloom,
Ruffled and unsmooth its plume,
Bows its neck, its pinions fly,
Abashed the gaze of stranger's eye;
"Father," she spoke, "it is not mine
To doubt the power of things divine,
Yet offer not thy gift to me,
For not my father's treasury
Could well such sacrifice repay.
But Dervish thou hast hairs of grey,

And better had'st thou now retire,
To warm thee by the glowing fire."
She paused—"who tracks the forest now,
Mid rustling yew and bending bough?
There is a sound of something near,
Not him who comes to seek me here.
A footstep, hark! it is not his,
The pawing of a steed it is;
A steed as dark, and black as death,
Is standing bridled on the heath.
Again! it is the last wild note
That swells the lonely bulbul's throat:
But yonder by the mountain way,
That winds amid the rocks away,
By shrubs and straying myrtles spread,
Whose lone and hastening footsteps tread?"
The Dervish paused, his eye dilating
Might tell the desperate hope elating.
"What! Mandan, that young traitor chief!
The triumph of thy love is brief;
Take this in vengeance for thy pride.
Now seek for me and for thy bride
Mid thousand spears," he said, and now
He tore the white hairs from his brow.
What change! his dark locks scattering fall
As if at an enchanter's call.

“ Now must thou flee with me away !
Beyond yon threat’ning rocks of grey ;
Nay, loveliest, loveliest, we must speed.”
The Dervish bare her to his steed,
Nor heeded he her pallid cheek,
Nor falling tear, nor fearful shriek,
“ When we have crossed yon rocks of grey,”
He said, and spurred his steed away.—

XII.

Mandan ! and is this thy meeting,
Just in time to mark thy bride,
Far o’er hill and ravine fleeting,
By the trait’rous Dervish’ side.
He heard her cry, he saw the steed
Dart forward on the wings of speed ;
He rushed, he crossed the gate and wall,
And darting in the festal hall,
He called for aid ; then dashed away
O’er hills, without one shrub to stay
His fall, if one dread step should fail ;
Like boat, without an oar or sail
To guide it, as it swiftly stray’d
Towards eddying whirls of wild cascade.
I gazed and gazed, the steps he gave
Were faster than that falling wave,
Until at last his breath misgave,

And down he fell, like mountain doe,
Pierced by the hunter's arrow through,
And yet in vain, the Dervish flies.
To win again his lovely prize,
Full fifty shrieking Tartar horse,
Down Assan's brow have wound their course,
And it will be a goodly race—
Is run for beauty or disgrace.
Yet onward still the Dervish flew,
Like lightning on the clouds of blue ;
On, on, his courser snuffs the wind,
The straggling Tartars left behind—
One cloud of dust, while echoing crash
The rocks beneath him to the dash.
Yet one, a gallant youth was he,
And famed for deeds of chivalry,
Upon a grey, not three days caught,
And such as gold had never bought,
Dashed forth, in the adventurous chase,
As if for life or death to race.
That steed had never felt the bit,
Nor lash his shaggy sides had hit,
Nor ever saddle yet had worn,
Nor rider until now had borne.
So maddening, starting with affright,
He darted on his desperate flight ;

Then reared on high, and plunged with fear,
Till Zerda sharply bit his ear,
Which checked the fury of his course ;
Then urged again his fiery horse
With spur, and lash, and slackened rein ;
Until the traitor's barb, again
Was scarce a bow shot on the plain
Before them in his flight ;

XIII.

Yet now the Dervish and his steed,
Rush along with double speed :
Yon rock is passed—they're out of sight,
I only heard her shriek of fright,—
I say I only heard her shriek,
I heard its echo from the peak ;—
I saw the courser's sable hair,
I saw her white robe in the air ;
Methinks it looked like a symar,
The moon gleamed o'er his scymitar,
And all had passed like falling star !
Zerda is down the mountain's side,
Pursuing yet the ravished bride ;
It was in vain, his courser shrank,
His spurs were buried in its flank—
Wild as the flash when thunders roll,
He dashed away from all control.

Away, away ! he speeds away
O'er ravine, hill,—o'er brake or brae ;
The very blast, the very wind
Seemed left upon his track behind ;—
Till by an abyss hid from view,
Where tamarind tufts around it grew,
And blushing roses in their bloom,
To lure the wanderer to his doom.
Still sped the courser—down they went !
Like foemen from a battlement ;
The moon gleamed down—the courser's mane,
Like spears upon a battle plain,
Was bristled up—his tail spread wide,
And blood and foam were on his side ;
His nostrils snorted—down he leapt
In depths whose measure none have kept.
Oft have I gazed upon it: still
It makes my very heart run chill
To gaze upon that dizzy steep,
Where Zerda and his courser sleep.

XIV.

Well, I have wondered oft how man
Will shorten life's contracted span,
To call himself, perchance, the lord
Of some unruly tribe or horde ;

But such the passion—such the rage,
Till chills ambition's fire with age;
Himself the offspring of an hour,
Forgotten, like the trampled flower
We prize when fresh and bloomingly
Its hue and odour meets the eye;
Then left to lie amid decay,
The cold consuming insects' prey:
Yet such a thing will care for aught,
And pass through scenes with peril fraught,
That others of their name may deem,
When they and theirs are like a dream,
And years have cast their dusky veil
Around the half forgotten tale.
Yes, gain, or honour's magic word,
Will bid him rush through wave and sword,
Thus, Nadir flushed with victory came
To tear another palm from fame;
But here, for foemen groweth none,
And all that tyrant hand hath won
In this wild nursery of the brave,
Hath been destruction or a grave,—
Yet, thousands rushing with the crest
Whose sun hath never been depressed,
With conquering Kouli for their lord,
May crush a lonely desert horde.

XV.

They came ! t'was on a barren plain
That skirts the border of the main ;
And morning, when its light appears,
Was glaring down on thousand spears ;
Their tents are sprinkled like the dew,
Or stars, o'er ether dark and blue.
And steeds, that spurn the dust beneath,
And dash like lightning o'er the heath ;
And blades unsheathed for bloody fray,
Are there in combat's stern array :—
Oh God ! it is a fearful sight
To mark the rage of battle blight
The fairest offspring of a land—
To mark it struggling on the sand,
Its meeting bands, like flood to flood ;
And breathing fire, distained with blood,
Like monster of the olden time,
To mortals sent for deadly crime :—
But oh ! it is as fair to see
Their banners waving wide and free ;
And rank come marching on, on rank,
Like tides upon an ocean bank ;
Their steeds enveloped in the dust,
And blades which only blood shall rust ;
And bright spears glittering o'er the mass,
Whose steel shall redden too, alas !

And then I heard the cry spread o'er
The living lines upon the shore,
To halt!—and though a foeman's sword
Could not as much, the magic word
Bids ranks, as waving forests wide,
To pause—as rocks press back the tide.

XVI.

The hour of evening is begun,
The scorching rays of morning sun
Have ceased to parch the desert sand,
And journey to some distant land;
Yet not one Tartar band appear
To check the conqueror's proud career;
Save lonely horsemen, who disdain
To leave the foe a single plain;
But keep a nigh on Tartar steed—
And if we slacken in our speed,
Dart down on lagging cavalier
With sabre drawn, and pointed spear;
And some, along the distant sand
Are come, to gaze upon our band;
And ill, I ween, they like the glance
That marks their last inheritance:—
For who will dare to meet him now
With victory on his scowling brow;

And legions round him, who might tell
How Tartary and India fell—
Who mocked to scorn the Ganges' flood,
And sheathed their sabres bright in blood !

XVII.

But now the desert wide is passed,
We reach the Caucas' chain at last ;
Its craggy steeps before us rose,
Where roc and mountain wolf repose ;
And here it were, perchance, the foes
Have fixed, our numbers to oppose.
Nor will we trust without a guide
Our men, in mountains rude and wide ;
For night is spreading like a pall,
The dews of eve begin to fall ;
Before us spreads the Caucas' chain,
Behind us one unbounded plain—
The haunt of rude and savage men,
Where ravine deep, and fitful glen,
And forests dark, and rocks appear,
And frown to check our bright career :—
For there, by abyss' fearful side,
'T is said that wizards dread abide,
And gholes and spirits take their flight,
And ride the darkness of the night.

XVIII.

The wary Persian halted here
With mingled brow of pride and fear,
The Vizier Lahr-Avallah's tent
Was pitched amid the armament,
The chiefs in hasty gathering
Had all assembled, save their king;
But where was he? it booteth not,
We know he could not be forgot
When all were there. Avallah rose,
And spoke: "Ye warriors! since the foes
Have fixed to shun us, yet their land
Shall fall beneath our faithful band;
'T were ill indeed to rest this night
Where spreads the Tartars' den in sight,
Whose savage bands might well come down
Beneath the night's protecting frown;
But yet our courage must awaken,
For a foeman hath been taken,
And he swears by all that's blest,
That the gathered Tartars rest—
Warriors, treasure, women, gold—
Not in any strengthened hold,
But upon a barren plain
Bordering on the rolling main;
There they rest till night is done,
There, until the morning sun

Fairer from its ocean home
Rise, than Venus from the foam.
There they rest, but morning come,
Rise with deep tambour and drum,
Every defile, every peak
Echoing back the fiendish shriek ;
But by Omar, and the blest !
Allah's arm protects the just,
He hath weighed the Tartars' hours,
And hath deemed their empire ours.
O'er yon hills secure they sleep ;
But their slumber shall be deep,
Death shall mow them, as a blight,
And their sleep be endless night ;
But if the Faithful fall in fight,
To them the lovely Houris wave,
And beckon, welcome to the grave ;
But it is time, the evening sun
Has sunk, the hour of night's begun,
Prepare, for it is time to march,
Yon sky is our triumphal arch,
And where yon purple banners wave
Sits victory now, to crown the brave
For ever on our golden sun !”

XIX.

It was night, yet chill and clear,
The muezzin hath done his prayer;
The last ray hovering o'er the earth
Like spirit o'er its place of birth,
Hath sunk at last beneath the ocean,
And the night wind stirs in motion,
And the dark sky spreading far
Glitters bright with many a star,
While the white moon's silver hue
Clothed in vapour pierces through;
And the dew is spreading wide
On the plain, and mountain's side,
And the dove hath sought its nest,
And the wild goat sinks to rest,
And the baba on the brake,
And the night bird is awake;
But to break the stillness round,
Hark! there is a murmuring sound,
Like the waves that come and go,
When the ocean tide is low:
'T is the mute and steady tramp
Of the warriors of the camp—
Wherefore march they thus by night,
Spear and sabre beaming bright,
Where the moon has spread its light,

On they move like tides of water,
Mute and stern, to death and slaughter ;
Like to spirits roving far,
Led along by evil star,
Thus in dark and shapeless mass,
On unto the hills they pass ;
In the rear is Kouli Khan,
One torch blazes in the van,
On before the Delhis ride,
Close before them is their guide,
Right and left with pointed spear
March a score of warriors near ;
Carbines aim around his head,
He is numbered with the dead
If we hear a single sound
Break the lonely silence round,
Nor I ween he 'll lead us wrong,
Held in thrall by such a throng.

XX.

Hark ! there is a lady's sigh
Mingles with the martial cry,
Eunuchs bear her by his side,
Fast, with hastening steps they ride.
'T is a Tartar slave he bought,
Fairer eyes have never sought,

Nor the Haram's lonely tower
Parted them a single hour;
For the maid unwillingly,
Still in haste with him must flee.

* * * * *

XXI.

But the rocks as we advance,
Strike more dread upon our glance;
Black and towering high they rise,
As in envy of the skies;
And the ravine by our side,
With its jaws is gaping wide;
Yet as farther on we go,
More dread the lonely passes grow;
And the clouds have veiled the night,
And the moon withdraws her light;
And the torch's flame is spread
With a wider glare of red.
Here the Vizier spurred his steed,
And the van is gained with speed:—
“Traitor, whither dost thou lead?
Answer! nay, within thy smile
I can mark thy traitor guile—
But by Him above, I swear,
Find we not the rovers' lair,

Thou shalt never mark again,
Save with dying glance, thy plain."
Orion—'t was the Tartar's name—
Pale and livid white became,
Fear a moment on his brow
Sits, but that is vanished now;
And the blood again rose high,
And he rolled his raven eye.
"Avallah! should I lead astray,
Then to the Prophet high I pray,
That tottering dread, that silken bridge,
Which stands upon the abyss's ridge,
Whose waves in burning sulphur flow,
May hurl me in the deep below—
Thence, never, never may I rise
To enter heavenly Paradise!"
Hark! to the shriek so wild and shrill,
Like startled night bird on the hill;
Each Delhi reined his steed—then on—
Ha! there a flash, and it is gone—
Close to the rock dark Orion drew—
He paused,—and shrieked one wild halloo!

XXII.

Up, up! said Sadi, and we rose
Like tiger darting on his foes;

One fearful blaze from rock to rock,
While earth seemed quivering with the shock ;
And deafening cry, and horrid shriek,
And thunders volleying from the peak,
That shewed beneath their crimson light,
The Tartars starting to the fight ;—
From every crag there is a flash—
Then down the mountain warriors dash,
And all was mixed in one wild crash :—
As hurled the foremost warriors fell,
Food for the vultures of the dell.
Again they paused—again the roar
Spread wider, louder than before ;
For joining wildly band to band
In conflict mix, the sword in hand,
And jar the sabres as they clash,
And o'er the night the carbines flash ;
And riding on their burning breath,
Shoot forth the messengers of death.
In vain—such arms too slowly kill,
The carnage must be wider still ;
And hatred deadlier aim the blow
Than parted from their burning glow :
Thus armed by fury on they go—
Here friends to friends—here foes to foes ;
Till one loud cry of “ Omar ! ” rose—

That cry so often heard in fight—
The sign of foeman's death or flight.
To Nadir and his turbaned ranks,
That cry was heard on Ganges' banks ;
And in the meadows of Kashmere,
Omen of conquest, death and fear ;
But here thou art on freedom's land,
And answering to thy cry, the brand
Starts only wilder from its sheath. * * *

XXIII.

Around, around on every side,
Close the avengers of Zuleyd ;
As eagle darting from its nest
Upon the ruffled falcon's crest ;
With talons stretched, and eye of fire,
Thus rage the Tartars in their ire :
I marked them through the rocks—a cleft
The only view of heaven had left.
Perhaps by falling thunder wrung,
Where by the towering hills o'erhung,
It formed in cavern deep, like cave,
Worn by the torrent, or the wave :
There gleamed the moonbeams down more bright,
Contrasted with that vale of night,
And there I marked them mix in fight ;

Yet scarce a man of Iran's land,
Hath to the foe resigned his brand,
But sinks the shivered sword in hand,
Or struggling from the Tartar's grasp,
Whose arms around them wildly clasp,
And leap into the gulf below,
And die, yet perish with a foe :
They fall on ataghan, or sword
Of other warriors of our horde,
And sink by shrieking group or mass,
Down the abysses of the pass.
There, but the winter winds that rave,
Shall weep on their unhallowed grave ;
And vulture wild, and carrion crow,
Feast on their torn remains below.
Avallah perished with his band,
Yet sank the scymitar in hand ;
His mantle rent, his turban dyed,
His poniard shivered by his side ;
His brow, his beard bedewed with gore,
And hope of victory lost and o'er ;
He sprang like torrent o'er its bank,
Amid the gathering foemen's rank,
That Vizier sought, he found a grave—
Avallah slumbers with the brave !

* * * * *

XXIV.

But yonder, moving from the fight,
I mark them by the torches' light,
That glimmers dimly o'er their band,
Are some retreating sword in hand,
Who through the circling ambuscade
Have hewn a passage with the blade;
And bloody banners borne before
Are moving swiftly to the shore.
Down on a broken road they go,
Nor where it leads they scarcely know;
Though sounds the roar of distant water,
Yet 't is well to 'scape from slaughter;
Better by yon stormy wave
Find a refuge or a grave,
Better trust yon element,
Than the chief whose brow is bent
Sternly, never to relent;
But they scarcely reach the strand,
When a shrieking Tartar band
Down descend upon the sand.
Form your ranks! a voice arose,
Loudly mid the flying foes;
Never yet hath sound or word
From those demon lips been heard,
Save when battle's adverse hour
Menaced stern the tyrant's power.

Swift they form in hasty line,
Bristled like the porcupine,
There with bloody broken spear,
Scymitar, and sabre here—
Stern and firm as mountain rock,
Now they wait the Tartars' shock,
Circling round that golden sun
Which the foe hath never won.
“Not one inch, save on the dead,
Shall the hostile Tartar tread—
Not a man can flinch or fly,
For the Khan himself is nigh :
Persians ! children of the brave,
Did my banner ever wave
Over aught but victory ?”
Hearken ! to the wild shrill cry,
Who is he, whose every blow
Deals destruction to the foe ?
Like the snowy mass that fell
Rolling far o'er vale and dell,
Rock and tree before it shivered ;
Thus their ranks before him quivered,
Opening to that single hand,
While the shouting Tartar band
Furious pour, as rank to rank,
Silently before them shrank,
He who leads them, scarcely now
Could that dark disfigured brow

Be the same, last eve who sighed
For his lost and ravished bride.
On ! the Persian ranks are flying,
Now their path o'er dead and dying,
Like the waves on ocean tossed,
Foes come pressing, host on host ;
Foremost still of all the horde,
Flashing, gleamed a single sword,
Still where slaughter deadliest rolled
Gleamed a turban's bloody fold.
Highest, proudest, mid the bold,
Still the Sophi seeks his bride ;
Hark ! a murmur, and it died
Faintly o'er that living tide—
A shriek ! it was a woman's shriek,
And fury flushed his pallid cheek.
“ I heard, I heard that shriek before,
Amid the battle's earliest roar,
The sound, the voice, that I could tell
Amidst a thousand others, well.”
No ! never word to lover's ear
Hath borne such mingled hope and fear ;
It lured him on, as serpent's gaze,
With magic centred in his rays,
Will draw the birds on which it preys,
And led him from his faithful band,
To rush upon the Persian brand,

Whose serried ranks no longer fly,
But round their banner slay or die;
Yet startled at his wild attack,
An instant pause, and then give back,
They mutter low, "the renegade,"
Then turn them from his dripping blade.
He comes with fury in his eye,
His sabre redly gleams on high,
His turban rent upon his head,
He rushes sternly o'er the dead,
With thundering voice that wildly raves
As wind upon the winter waves :
"Yea, on, by Allah ! swiftly on,
I marked her here, and she is gone;
But I will meet her, or the slave
Himself shall strew a bloody grave.
I saw him here, his pallid brow
Yet smiled beneath yon cypress bough ;
I knew him through his soldier garb,
I knew him by his fiery barb ;
I gazed, methinks upon the blast,
A white robe fluttered as he past ;
The traitor fled, a second time
Shall pay the forfeit of thy crime ;
Again I hear the voice, again
It mingles with the murmuring main,

And now we meet; yes, now or never,
Though we thus divide for ever.
Slaves stand back, the steady hand
And Persian lance have scared his band,
On alone the bold chief dashes,
Yet the tophaikes' deadly flashes
Answer to his summons gave :
Strange indeed he 'scaped a grave !
Every clansman's heart misgave
When that cloud of sulphurous smoke
Round the chieftain's charger broke.

XXV.

Like the angry lion's bound,
Roused by foes from mid-day sleep,
Was the warrior's furious leap,
As he cast his glance around.
Scarce an instant to the eye
Flashed the sabre's gleam on high ;
Like the genius of the fight,
Passed and vanished to the sight,
Chief, and steed, and foaming blade,
Through the gap his falchion made.
" Allah ! do I mark thee now,
With yon fiend of evil brow,
High of highest, is it thou ?

Dervish, loose her!—halt again!
Or thou’rt numbered with the slain.”
But the Dervish smiled in scorn,
“Taunt I never yet have borne,
Young man, gaze, and see the hand
Clasps so firm the reeking brand,
Wert thou worthy of its blow,
Traitor, this had laid thee low;
Yet a word, or gesture more,
Like the grass thou strew’st the shore.
Persians, on him,”—and the foes
Grappling with the Tartars, close,
Yet again they wildly meet
Fast as flashing lightnings greet.
High o’er horse and man o’erthrown,
On the pass’s rocky stone.
Midst them all the Sophi broke,
And they dealt a mutual stroke;
Blood was on the Dervish’ cloak,
Staggering to the chieftain’s blow,
Feeble, faint, his efforts grow,
And his arm was seen to lower,
Scarce, indeed, was left the power
To raise it in that fearful hour;
Trembling, pale, with haggard eye,
Now he marked the chief rush by,
Leaving him a dying foe,
To the ruder Tartar’s blow;

Drooping almost by his side,
Lay the Sophi's fainting bride,
Guarded by her eunuch slaves;
High again his falchion waves,
Four are in their rocky graves!

XXVI.

Darker came the Dervish' brow,
Till it grew to blackness now,
And his pale lips quivered fast,
And the hectic flush is past;
Yet it told not life had fled,
For his eye but glanced more dread,
As the ranks of coming foes
Round in threat'ning numbers close.
On her Mandan's hand is lain,
And his bride is won again!
But the Dervish started—"never!
From my loved in life I sever;
Back thine hand, and back thy steel,
Or, by Omar! thou shalt feel."
Like the tiger reft of young:
Wildly from his steed he sprung,
Warriors! followers!—all in vain,
Far they scatter o'er the plain;
One bold effort once again,

Yet away his bride to bear ;
Vainly, never shalt thou tear
From the Sophi's desperate grasp,
Her, whose arms around him clasp ;
Firm he holds her, and his hand
Threat'ning waves on high the brand,
Fury darting from his eyes,
Now the Dervish quits his prize.
Allah! shot that flashing beam
From the naked poniard's gleam?
"Thou wert doomed by destiny
Mine, or Azrael's prey to be!"
Bending forward with a start,
"Maiden! this before we part!
This!" he plunged it in her heart.
"Now Sophi, take thy bride!"
She whisper'd once, and once she sigh'd,
The gushing stream of purple dyed
Her waving locks and tunic white ;
Ah heaven! it was a fearful sight
To wild and frantic lover's eye,
To mark the ebbing spirit fly,
And cast aside each lingering girth,
Before it left the dim cold earth,
And struggle ere it burst away,
To leave that form, a shape of clay,

To mingle in the element,
Whose aid to form its being lent,
As fair, as pure, as deadly pale,
As lily in the lonely vale,
Where wont her wandering steps to tread,
Where thousand flowers their odours spread.
One might have said, can this be death?
This loveliness, that wants but breath
To make it fairer than those things
That float on high on azure wings,
The Genii messengers that bring
The desert's dew, the mountain's spring?
And must that bleeding heart and breast,
That pale and fading cheek, be pressed
Upon the cold and earthy bed,
To rest and slumber with the dead?
And must those eyes for ever be
Now closed, or fixed on vacancy,
Those eyes, whose hazel orbs could tell,
And speak in words unspeakable?

XXVII.

"It cannot be, it cannot be—
The light and lovely form I hold
Is but the cold remains of thee,
Despairing to my breast I fold;

And I could look upon thy cheek,
And gazing wildly, call thee mine,
Until my throbbing heart were weak,
And hushed in death, as thine.
One more embrace, one more, again!
Before for ever from my grasp
That lovely form in earth is lain;
No more, alas! these arms shall clasp;
But vengeance! vengeance! have I slept?
Hath Thamas' son then here remained,
And unavenged yet calmly wept,
While yet he waves the poniard stained,
That robbed my soul of rest with her?
Now on! again, whate'er thou art,
Or fiend or demon, murderer,
The deadly weapon waits thy heart!"

XXVIII.

The steel yet gleaming in his hands,
Upon the shore the Dervish stands,
He stands with blood and dust defiled,
And pallid brow; and grimly smiled,
As now the Sophi left that thing
That lifeless still he held, to spring
As wolf upon his living prey,
The startling blaze on morning grey,

That flashing far from willing hands,
Now told that many a hundred brands
Were wildly waved mid hostile bands;
Then had they met we deem right well,
The Sophi's Dervish foe had fell—
Their blades were almost touching seen,
When rushed a Persian band between,
And forming for a living screen,
With long zagai and ataghan—
They shouted loudly, "save the Khan!"
And he who wore the Dervish garb,
Is mounted on his fiery barb,
And flies again, that thing of fear,
Whose name the boldest quaked to hear;
And then my tongue were cold to tell
The deeds of horror that befell,—
The deadly vengeance of our horde
Must die upon my murmuring chord:
For I know yon streamlet's water
Reddened with the waves of slaughter;
And the shout tremendous rose,
As we poured upon the foes;
Shriek on shriek arose to tell
Death and fury as they fell,—
Many a torch was hurled on high
In the frantic vengeance cry,—

Crash on crash, and shout on shout,
Told the tyrant's bloody route ;
Black the sky, no light appears,
Save the warriors' gleaming spears,
Glancing back the flash of red,
That the tannen torches spread ;
Thus they mingle as the tide,
High o'er ocean's sloping side
Half way meets the silvery wave.

* * * * *

XXIX.

Hark ! to the dashing steps of speed,
What warrior comes on battle steed,
As spurred by quick'ning lash of need ?
Last night in different garb and mood
He came to wake our solitude,
With panting heart, and fluttering breast,
And now by double crime oppressed,
Despair and anger seem to lead
The reins of yonder fiery steed ;
Last night it was, in deep disguise,
He came to win a lovelier prize
Than India's bright and golden sands
Could purchase for his tyrant hands.

He seized her, and the morning hour
Hath seen the clouds of fortune lower
With love and bliss, and might and power;
Yet even not such gifts as these,
Insatiate, fiery hearts can please.
There was a barren, fruitless land
Disdained the Sultan's high command:
The morning marked him dread and gay,
While countless thousands round him lay,
With slavish hearts that loved him still,
And blades to do a master's will.
So much mankind can court the hour
That dawns o'er crime, when crime is power!
This night has marked the death of her,
And deems yon chief her murderer.
He would not leave a single hour,
Though safe in guarded Haram's tower;
This night has marked him fly alone,
His countless myriads slain and gone,
Yet he alone who led away
Those bands to serve for vulture's prey
Is safe from all, on wings of speed,
And flies on yonder battle steed;
Yet better warriors, death and fame,
Than tyrants' flight, and tyrants' shame,
The dead the Tartars hurled below
Shall never feel its burning glow;

But he shall writhe with other woes
Than steel or scorn of human foes ;
There is a canker in his heart,
Whose widening sting, and widening dart,
Are neither quelled nor crushed by time,
A living mirror held to crime.
He starts upon his Arab steed,
He stops, or urges on his speed,
At every fragment rude of rock
Detached by wind, or earthquake's shock,
With motion of unearthly fright
As spectre rose to check his flight,
As if she left her shallow grave
Beside the Caspian's foaming wave,
And came by light of morning star
Across his path, in white symar.
Thus every step of guilt is spread
With fear and terror for its tread,
Its pleasures like to poisoned flowers
Are pastimes of embittered hours,
Its hours of sleep are none of rest,
A stranger to its startled breast,
And dreams that flit on wings of fright,
And dark in horror as the night,
With hands that paint his crime again,
Are imaged on its fevered brain.

Thus speed thee on, my curse on thee
As that of Man, a time must be.
Already spreads thy fair domain,
The temple of and tyrant's reign;
Before, in many a fruitful plain.
But vengeance comes for her who fell
Beneath thy hand, in Assan's dell;
Beneath the very hand, that tore
The victim from her native shore;
And snatched her rudely from his side,
For love of whom Zuleyda died—
Yea, vengeance comes! for many a land
He ravaged with his impious hand;
But thine it is directs the blow,
Shall stretch the traitor tyrant low,
With less of mercy than he gave;
Within the cedar wood his grave.

* * * * *

XXX.

All, all was lost in battle's rage;
And he, the last, the living page
Of that proud line that rul'd before
The sceptre of the Persian shore,
Now held and trampled by a slave,
Who rose o'er them, he dared to brave.

When morning, with its rays of light,
Beamed o'er the reddened arms, yet bright,
Of those stern victors of the fight;
No eagle plume, no lion crest,
Was seen on living warrior's breast.
They sought him mid the thickening dead,
Where rank on fallen rank were spread;
They turned the stiff and gory slain,
They found him not, it was in vain:
His steed was seen to fly alone
In battle's heat; but he is gone!
They knew him by the bit of gold,
Such as in Satraps we behold.
Some say he sought a quicker grave
Than that which tardy nature gave;
Unwilling to survive her fall,
Who was his soul, his life, his all;
Well, may'st thou rest—yea! be it so,
Thou child of mingled joy and woe;
But thou, old Sadi, not thy years
Have saved thy furrowed brow from tears:
In vain those scanty hairs of grey
Thy hands in sorrow tear away.
She was—she was the last, indeed,
To soothe thee in thy hours of need:
Yet all thy tears are wept in vain,
Thy daughter never comes again;

Yet sigh, for it may ease thy breast,
By trouble and by age oppressed.
Hark ! hark ! I hear the sound of woe
Arise in murmuring bursts below ;
Its swelling sound, by breezes spread ;
The mourners there, who weep the dead,
Now strew that lonely grave with flowers,
She loved to seek in forest bowers ;
The roses fair, the cypress gloom,
Are twined around that early tomb
That rises mid the desert wild,
To mark the spot where fell its child !

XXXI.

I know not if it might be pride,
That urged to many things beside,
That bade me fly mankind, and dwell
My counted hours in Gylong's cell.
I neither loved, nor loathed my race,
Yet flew from man, and shunned his trace,
Contented with the loneliest lot ;
Yet never stranger passed my grot,
When evening's hour of gloom began,
But blessed the hermit of Assan.
None up yon mountain ever rose,
But tasted in my cell repose :

. The crystal brook—a Gylong's fare—
For all, as well as me, was there.
At morn I roamed each woodland dell,
And slept the noon day in my cell;
At eve my thirsting lips rehearse
The Prophet's word, and Koran's verse;
Nor ever rose the words of life
O'er scene of battle, care, and strife,
From tongue more fervent pray'd than mine
To Him, their Author, high divine.
Thus would I sit at evening hour,
And mark the orb of brightness lower;
Or track upon his weary way
The pilgrim mount yon mountain grey—
A speck like bird in air-like race,
Whose pinions leave nor track nor trace—
So small he seemed upon its base:
Thus pass'd my hours, and days, and years,
Devoid of passions, toils, and fears.
It was methinks the fortieth moon—
The fortieth sun it will be soon,
That I had lived in lonely mood
The child of ceaseless solitude.
There came, one dark and stormy night—
Far guided by my beacon light
That rose amid the wilderness,
The sign of shelter to distress—

A pilgrim clothed in tattered weed,
And emptied flask and shatter'd reed ;
Yet pity waked not with the glance
Which roused me from my midnight trance.
The harmless thing that crawls the sod,
By foot unwary crushed or trod,
May claim it ; but the wolf, that fell
By bow, or spear directed well,
Whose eyes yet fury glance on those
His parting gasp had deemed his foes :
Though passed his hour, and fixed that gaze
By death-like glare, and filmy glaze—
Will breed not pity's glance but fear,
Though haply slain by hunter's spear.
Thus though the stranger's eye might tell
Of no uncommon hopes that fell,
The gazer yet might deem it well,
That never high such spirit rose
Whose glance was fixed on all as foes :
So dark that brow, so wild that eye,
So deep and void of hope that sigh.
Yet me whose thoughts, whose hours, whose days
Are far from man and mortal ways ;
Or slaughter's son, or Christian's creed,
Were safe with me in hour of need :
No word but welcome now I spoke,
Till silence deep the pilgrim broke:—

“ Ah ! Mercy ! stranger, who art thou ?
I know that voice—I know that brow—
The chief that led our conquering bands ?
Or art thou phantom there that stands,
To lure me on with waving hands ?
No ! thou art none that comes from rest—
Come, long lost Sophi, to my breast :
The time is gone—the hour is changed ;
But never, never love estranged !

XXXII.

“ It matters little, Father, how
Those days have gathered on my brow,
Whose deadly passions on my form
Have left the trace of withering storm ;
Unless for thee the pilgrim’s tale
Might never passing tear bewail.
Thus Father let me die alone,
My name and deeds alike unknown ;
Or if perchance thy trusty ear
The secret of my tale must hear—
Dark in the veil of mystery
Forgotten—silent let it be :
Nor Gylong seek to soothe my grief—
The last, the passing hour is brief,
Shall fix that wayward hope that flies—
The hope thy Moslem creed denies.

Then hearken! On that fearful night
That frowned upon the Monarch's flight,
Whose legions broke, whose warriors fell,
Mid every pass, in yonder dell;
The night our chieftain's only daughter
Died amid that scene of slaughter.
On my breast she breathed her last—
From my arms her spirit pass'd.
Oh! Zuleyda, years nor time
Shall ever veil the tyrant's crime:
Earth, and smiling heaven above,
Bear ye witness to our love!
Ours was of a fiercer name,
Ours was like a mingled flame;
We were like an only stem,
One and partless as a gem,
Till the hand of Zatanai
Tore her from my breast away.
She died! it was a higher power
Withheld my spirit in that hour.
I would have sought relief in death;
I could not live, I could not breathe,
When cold she lay as sculptured stone,
A pilgrim on the earth alone—
Alone indeed, when she was gone!
I paused—that anguish was but brief,
A mightier passion far than grief

Arose—a thirst that naught could quell:
I swore—and I have kept it well,
That never, never would I rest,
But wander forth from east to west,
Mid palace high and gilded dome,
To track the tyrant to his home;
Until myself in earth were low,
Or till I marked the dying foe
Beneath my trampling footsteps writhe,
As worm beneath the mower's scythe,
Until I marked that glazing eye,
That last, that deep and hopeless sigh,
And whispering in his ear her name,
I gazed upon his quivering frame ;
Until the last and dying groan
Those pale and blackening lips had flown ;
Until I marked that right arm quiver,
That arm whose fearful blade could sever
My earthly hopes, too sure, for ever.

XXXIII.

His banner torn, yet waved on high
I marked the haughty Sultan fly,
It was in vain ! my charger's speed
Was nothing to his Arab steed.

I saw him on the distant sand
Alone of all his flying band,
Till hid beneath the veil of night,
He fled like shadow from my sight,
And join'd ere day the anxious troop
Around the pass, in many a group,
Awaiting till their leader's name,
Again with sound of triumph came.

* * * * *

Faint and worn within a cave,
Beside a streamlet's murmuring wave,
I sought an instant sleep or rest
In vain—it fled my fever'd breast;
While my bleeding lips became
Thirsty, parched, and hot as flame.
But I had no power to rise,
Though the beam of mid-day skies,
Scorched my brow and aching eyes;
Fever burned upon my brain,
Writhing, maddening with the pain.
I had tried with sudden bound
Up to lift me from the ground;
But my weakness, like a thong,
Held my writhing spirit strong;

And I could not stir one pace,
Not to hide my blistering face,
In the cavern's cooler place ;
Not the running wave to sip
O'er my burnt and longing lip.
Oh ! 't was speechless agony
Thus for hours and hours to lie,
Nothing breaking on the eye,
On that pure and taintless sky,
Save the fleeting vapoury shroud,
Or the bird that crossed the cloud :
For each turn I made again
Shook my limbs with double pain ;
And I gazed, with longing look,
On the waters of the brook ;
And I marked the sparkling beam
Of the sun ray on the stream ;
Yet had not power my thirst to slake,
Though beside its waters break :
And like that liquid crystal's gleam
Hath been my true and living dream ;
Inviting as that murmuring wave,
And dark within it as the grave,
That shrouds thee in its boundless sea,
And waits with open arms for me—
Thus all I ever held as dear
Has mocked my grasp, though flitting near,

Like passing shadows on the walls
Of Persia's high illumined halls;
Or like the fair and cloudless sky,
A field of azure spread on high;
When sought, the vapours dim and white,
Are all that meet the gazer's sight.

XXXIV.

And thus for many an hour I lay
In torturing beam, on sunny day,
Till evening spread its veil of grey;
'T is not my broken words can tell,
'T is not this trembling tongue can dwell
On all I felt, I suffered then;
I would not feel it o'er again
For all the Sultan's wide domain :
It was not only pain and throes
That stung me, but my inward woes;
Whose thoughts, all imaged wild and dense,
Came rushing o'er my reeling sense;
And thus, in slowly hours of pain,
The night, I never thought again
To see, stole on—a light wind blew,
I felt some drops of evening dew
That fell upon my brow, the same,
I felt its fevered glow of flame;

As thoughts of truth that dart within
A sullied mind of crime and sin,
Will only leave their scourge and sting,
Themselves for ever take the wing:
They damped, yet freshened not my brow
Or tongue, which fiercer panted now;
That night, if such could be, I say,
Was even ghastlier than the day;
That night of sleeplessness and grief
Doth nigh exceed mine own belief;
The one I lost, the one who slew,
Were present to my maddening view.
I thought I saw him strike again,
And I was held in galling chain,
And could not move a step to save,
Or share with her, her rocky grave;
Nor wreak the vengeance which she craved
When last her kerchief white she waved:
I thought I heard her fainting scream—
I started from my living dream;
Again I heard it near—on high,
A vulture's wings passed flapping by—
Another and another passed,
The fevered glow grew chill at last;
They passed again and hovered near
With rustling wing and shriek of fear—

They soar on high, again they lower,
'T was clear they waited but the hour
That breath and life had passed away
To dart upon their human prey :
I know that ghastly serenade,
For long with flapping wings they played ;
At first I would have shunned the fate
They seemed with glistening eyes to wait ;
It was not that I feared its power,
But such a death, and such an hour !
For life on many a battle plain
I've risked, and now would risk again :
But unavenged, alone I lay,
The mountain fox and carrion's prey ;
This was by sickness bowed so dread ;
A chillness grew o'er heart and head ;
And for a time I could not tell
In giddiness of what befel ;
At last I felt a vulture's tread
That deemed too soon that life had fled ;
It almost gave me force to spring,
The thought was like an adder's sting :
My weakness scarce that grasp could check,
I seized the rover by the neck,
And heedless of his brethren's note,
I sucked the life-blood from his throat :

I know it freshened every vein,
As India's fields revive with rain,
And shrub, and plant, and tree, and flower,
Are nourished by the genial shower,
That menacing above them shook—
It gave me force to seek the brook,
And long and deep I drank that wave
That saved me from an early grave,
To stretch perhaps in after hour,
Zuleyda's murderer in my power.—

XXXV.

I sought the berries of the wood,
Which served me for my only food;
But little are the wants of man,
Like life, contracted to a span;
This Hafiz and our bards of old
But unbelieved till now have told:—
I rested there another day,
Then journeyed on the weary way.
I followed, towards the Persian side,
My steed, my best and only guide—
I cannot tell thee where we went,
I sought for long the Persians' tent,
And then to chance, and to his speed,
Resigned, I spurred my Usbec steed.

I knew, I cared not where to go,
But tried in vain, by blow on blow,
To urge my steed, and lash by lash,
Beyond my following thoughts to dash;
They followed fast—their mingled mass
Like simoom o'er my senses pass.

XXXVI.

Oh father! thou who here alone,
When all around are fled and gone,
In this thy dark and lonely cell,
Contented with thyself canst dwell—
Thou canst not know the soul of fire,
That knits these bending brows in ire.
Unlike the mind as polished steel,
Though soft, yet little formed to feel;
It is not such as thine can know
The fierce extremes of joy and woe:
Nor can I say, nor thou conceive,
Those torturing thoughts that never leave;
Nor less those lips that whiten tell
That darkest hour of inward hell.—
I read thine answer in the smile
That played with pitying glance awhile.
You mean I lost a promised bride,
But many others by their side
Have marked their kindred as they died;

And many a son hath wept his sire,
And babes in the consuming fire.
But go ! The cubless lioness,
When hand unknown hath reft her young,
Is different to the goat's distress,
Though from one cause their sorrow sprung.
While one will leap from rock to rock,
One with that voice like thunder peal
Will shake the forests, to the shock :
'T is thus, that I, and they can feel.
Theirs is the grief that lasts a day,
Forgotten in their earliest strife ;
Like star extinguished on its way ;
But mine is that, which lasts for life,
Whose only thought is imaged still,
Not the attendant of an hour,
Which haunts me yet despite my will,
And holds me with tyrannic power.

XXXVII.

I know, whate'er I thought or did,
My memory spoke of nought beside,
That image still would rush unbid,
Which vain my trembling breast would hide.
And why should I that thought disguise ?
'T is all that now remains of her ;
She drooped her head, she closed her eyes,
No more that lovely form to stir.

Yes ! she was all I loved on earth,
The playmate of my earliest hours,
Companions almost from our birth,
Our home was in the loneliest bowers.
A thousand times by yon cascade
Beneath the moonlight's starry veil,
Zuleyda and myself have strayed,
And gathered flowerets from the vale.
A thousand times at hour of rest
Our steps have mounted yonder steep,
To seek the shaded turtle's nest,
Or mark the waves of ocean sweep :
And yonder, where our dwelling rose,
Where rose her father's and my own,
The grass blade, and the wall-flower grows
Upon its crumbling walls of stone.
Adieu ! adieu ! ye hours of bliss,
Your very shadow now and trace
Have sunk, and died away to this,
And naught remains but nature's face ;
Unchanged, and still unchangeable.
Whose varied forms of beauty smile,
While thousand passing tenants dwell,
On thee their hands can ne'er defile ;
Thy rivers, hills, are still the same,
Though years and years have passed away ;
If changed in aught it is in name,
Which alters with our mortal clay.—

* * * * *

But these alone will never change,
 Who, freedom allied to their name,
 Will meet our thoughts when back they range,
 Far on the darkening scroll of fame.
 Thus Greece, and the republic Rome,
 The themes of every age and clime,
 Will still escape the general doom,
 And rise above the wings of time.

* * * * *

XXXVIII.

At last from out that forest's depth
 My panting courser found his way,
 One boundless plain before me lay,
 Between whose fair and wide extent,
 A winding river curled and bent;
 Its waters rolled to distant sight,
 Like sheet of silver spreading, bright;
 So white they sparkled to the sun
 Which rose above the horizon,
 And tinged with golden trace the way—
 He mounted on his throne of gray;
 It was methinks unto mine eye,
 The fairest scene, the fairest sky,
 That ever dawned with day on high.
 I gazed upon that plain of blue,
 Whose azure spread before my view,

With nothing but the silvery moon,
That palely sinks, to vanish soon.
Oh that I were a bird with wings,
Like those that mock these grovelling things,
And carol in the boundless sky,
My joy had been to dwell on high,
And revel in those airy seas !
Or when as now in sullen mood,
To mingle in the thunder cloud,
Oh how my soul at every crash
Could mingle with the lightning's flash,
And on the air of darkness dash.
Ah! would that fate, that bound to earth
This soul indignant of its birth,
Had formed it to some spirit's place
Of Genii's wild and air-like race;
Although to make a third of those
Whose arms in dark rebellion rose,
And proudly stood the prophet's foes.
For oh! this soul was never made
On earth it scorns, to pine and fade,
Before it freely passed away
In tenement of mortal clay;
And hers was of that sympathy,
At every glance that met mine eye;
And yet I weep her spirit's flight
To realms more fair, and pure, and bright,
Than this dark atmosphere of night.

I paused again ; my foot has trod
My native land, the Persian sod.
I would have smiled, and passed in scorn
The land where all my race were born,
But every flower before me spread,
As if reproached me with my tread ;
And every scene recalled again
My native place, my father's reign.
They wooed me to one smiling glance
Upon my lost inheritance ;
Where seemed in every glade to dwell
That magic power of beauty's spell.
For every breeze that stirs on high,
The calm, the quiet of the sky,
Like fairy and enchanted gale,
Wafts but the odours of the vale,
And if the cypress rise in gloom,
It shadows not o'er lowly tomb,
But mingling with the citron bowers,
Its shadowy branches shade the flowers,
And every mountain dim and pale
Is seen like beauty through its veil,
With clouds of azure spread around,
Exhaling from that fruitful ground :
In vain—these tear-drops shall not burst,
It is the land that I have cursed.
Yes ! let that curse descend again,
I hurl it on the fair domain.

XXXIX.

It is the land that holds the grave
Of him, whose mighty hand could save
The shore of Hellas from the slave
He saved, to leave in foreign land
Those ashes, exiled from his strand.
Yet on his lips the curse but died;
He turned to Athens, and he sighed—
That calmer spirit well might do,
Not heart that's rent, like mine with woe.
The oak the winds of Europe bend,
The whirl of Asia's blasts will rend;
To pardon wrongs like mine or his,
One well must be Themistocles.
The Roman came with brow of gloom,
And thundered at the gates of Rome,
While blackening legions circled there,—
He saved it at a mother's prayer;
He saved, and rang his funeral knell,
But he of Athens poisoned fell.
Before the flame or blade he bore
To waste that proud ungrateful shore;
But mine is Asia's fiercest blood,
No river's wave; a torrent's flood.
Were mine the power, no hand should save
That race, that nation from the grave;
And thousand towns in blood and flame
Should find my threat and deed the same.

It is a debt for ages gone ;
They hurled my father from a throne,
The sapling of that race that stood
Like palm-tree towering o'er the wood,
Though orphan left to Tartar horde
Must feel the persecuting sword ;
They came to strew this wild recess,
With carnage, terror, and distress,
Because that shelter it had given,
Denied by all but here and heaven.
Their chief himself in deep disguise,
Like holy man and Saint Dervise,
Received by all with open arm,
But broke our bread to plan us harm ;
He robbed me of my loved Zuleyde,
Beneath the Demon's arm she died.
But dost thou think the rock shall drink
Her blood, whose stain shall only sink ?
Lo ! yonder mouldering on the plain,
A thousand fleshless skulls are lain,
To mark our vengeance,—but in vain
In other lands, in deadlier strife,
I rushed to seek another life ;
There was but one, and only one,
Whose fall and death might yet atone,
And cast a veil o'er what befel
On that dark day in Assan's dell,

Thus every motion, every thought,
With hope of death, or vengeance fraught,
It is not strange the foe I sought—
I sought, but friendless and alone,
To strike a monarch from the throne!
A monarch girt by million swords—
With death and terror in his words,
The brightest conqueror and the first,
Since nations Timur's name have cursed.

XL.

It was a thoughtless, mad design,
But vengeance only beamed in mine;
Thus oft the wounded deer we find
By dogs or hunters' ring confined,
Will dart upon the threatening round,
And seek the hand that dealt the wound.
I knew not how, I recked not where,
Thus in the frenzy of despair,
To meet the one who left me this—
A thing—without a hope of bliss!
For others when a day of woes
Is darkening to a welcome close,
And fading to the shades of night,
Yet hope shall dawn with morrow's height;
For me, the morning's smile again
Returns the sorrow and the pain.

The grave itself, that place of rest,
That meets the weary and unblessed,
For me hath neither hope nor gloom;
For though there smiled beyond the tomb
Those lovely bowers, that paradise
That shone to dreaming prophet's eyes;
Zuleyda! ever closed to thee,
What were that selfish heaven to me.

XLI.

They call our race the noblest part
Of Allah's works, of Allah's art,
Yet why that race the most accursed,
By law of nature deemed the first?
For let him say whose shortest years
Have passed unworn by sighs and tears;
The bird will seek its feathered nest,
And sink with evening grey to rest;
The chamois on its hills of snow
Will seek the glades where pine trees grow,
The reptile in his marshy fen,
The tiger in his reeking den,
The lion in his cave, will find
That peace that flies the human mind,
And live in thoughtless happiness,
While ours is pleasure or distress.—

* * * * *

XLII.

Nay! Gylong talk not thus to me,
The visions of eternity
Are known to none, and less to thee!
Unfathomed still by human mind,
Those depths the dying soul shall find;
But let me, father, to my tale,
Not mine thy slavish creed to rail.—
I will not tell thee every place
Where nature frowned or smiled in grace,
Those scenes my steps might pass again
Unknown, and freshening to my ken,
So little on my mind they dwelt,
So much of other woes I felt.
The deserts wide, and sandy sea,
The mountain's scene was one to me,
In youth, my foot had loved to dwell
On rockiest peak by flood and fell,
The mountain air, the mountain sky,
My pure and varied tapestry.
In earlier hours, in earlier days,
Such scenes had won my joy or praise;
But they, the spring of life was gone,
My thoughts were dwindled all to one,
Which wildly rose and spurred me on.
Yet often times mine eyes would roam,
When waked from reverie of gloom

O'er fairer scenes, where once 't is told,
Some deed of fame was wrought of old.
I passed, and not unawed, the spot
Which Persia's sons have scarce forgot,
Where dark Iskander o'er the foes,
As whirlwind in the desert rose,
And vengeance years and years deferred,
One day of fortune's gleam conferred;
When Xerxes crossed the Hellespont,
To fame, obedience, victory, want!
He little thought the chains he bore
For Hella's free and valiant shore,
Would serve to arm a conqueror's hand
Against his own, his native land.
Yet, what remains? A dusty plain,
Where hundred thousands slept in vain;
Without one only trace to tell,
That there the trembling orient fell;
Unless what lives in memory's page,
To tell the world in after age
A tyrant's fate—a tyrant's doom—
A broken chain—a bloody tomb!
Thus Athens ravaged, found at last
A hand to strike for injuries past,
And young Iskander crushed a throne
To make the Persian's crime his own.

The spot I passed where Cyrus died,
Which tells a monarch's fratricide,
And rises darkly to his name—
Eternal monument of shame !
Yet here no trace, no mouldering bone
Could tell the contest for a throne ;
All gone, all faded, passed away
To death's oblivion, as may they.
The cedar spreads its boughs of green,
Which bend to earth a shadowy screen,
The olive and the tree of gloom
Are mingled with the gul's perfume ;
But further on the arid sand,
Where armies stood, now palm tufts stand,
And less the withering herbs that grow,
Than ranks of either meeting foe,
Who sleep in yonder sand, alas !
The camel here and trader pass,
And seek alike the freshening well,
Unheedful on such scenes to dwell,
Now dark'ning into twilight's grey,
Then both contented, pass their way.

XLIII.

I had wandered once a weary way,
And faint and panting was my steed,
Of wild and hardy Usbec breed,

And such as rarely in our land
Are ta'en alive by hunter's hand;
Their very nostrils breathe such fire,
As shew the rider first must tire ;
Upon the border of a wood
A lone and homely cottage stood,
Its smoke arose from out the glen,
My path was far from haunts of men ;
Until the very capital
With dome, and minaret, and hall,
And tower, and palace, to mine eyes
One living blaze of light should rise.
Yet now my thirst, my panting steed
All hot and foaming from his speed,
Induced me to that door, to crave
What mocked my search, the fresh'ning wave ;
And down the glen my courser sped—
This once it was my fate that led,
For lo ! beside the wood, behold
The distant gleam of steel and gold,
A hunter band in proud array
Wound slowly down the mountain way ;
And further rose, a pavilion,
And banner glittering in the sun ;
And who are they ? I know again
That crimson, like a blood-red stain,

Some satrap slave who bears in chase,
The crest and banner of my race;
But what an Emir's pride to me ?
A higher one I sought than he.
I flew—I crossed the forest glade,
For long the cedar spread its shade ;
At last as up the hill we wound,
The summit's barren rocks we found,
Whose base the spreading forests bound.
A silver rill ran gushing down
O'er hills whose blackness seemed to frown,
And further hastening, as we go
The wooded vale unfolds below ;
And shewed the huntsmen far beneath
Spread widely o'er the valley's heath.
And hark ! the lonely bugle's swell,
Whose savage notes arise to tell
The wolf and pard shall bleed to-day,
By yonder warriors' armed array ;
But who is he, whose steed disdains
In fire and pride the tight'ning reins ?
'T is he ! 't is he ! I cannot err—
'T is he ! Zuleyda's murderer !
I know him by the gem, that bright
Gleams high above his turban white ;

I know him by that darkened brow
Whose frown is deeper, deadlier now:
'T is him ! 't is him ! it is the hour,
My steed has strength, my arm has power.
Away ! Zuleyda's only name
Hath lit again the vengeance flame.
Down, as the eagle from the rock,
We leap o'er heath and granate block,
The wood, so fast we sped away,
Seemed dim as seen by evening's grey :
We reached the border of the wood,
'T was there the monarch calmly stood,
His glistening eye, and listening ear,
Await till panther darting near,
Or lynx, or monarch of the wood,
In speed should pass by where he stood.

XLIV.

Hark ! in the forest, hark ! the sound
Like lion's step, or tiger's bound ;
The grove is passed—we meet—we meet,
Our cries of mutual fury greet ;
His eye was wild, his cheek was pale
As gleam of moonlight in the vale ;
It might be rage, it might be fear—
The hour that Eblis craved was near,

For threat'ning was his voice, though low,
And trembling aimed, yet stern his blow.
We meet, we meet, no more to part,
For fearless to his foeman's heart
Our mutual weapons clashing shone,
For death, we thought not of our own.
'T was clear such combat could not last—
An instant, and the strife was passed!
The blow which fate and vengeance dealt
The frame that throbbed with fury felt,
The hand that slew in Assan's dell,
Like reed by blast of ocean fell;
My weapon quivered in his breast,
Again! again! now tyrant, rest.
He muttered, but the words he spoke
Were faint and trembling, low and broke,
'T was something of futurity
He muttered—mercy, could it be?
Then blasted love, and death to me.
I scarcely marked the words he said,
His blood was spouting on my blade;
He fell beneath his steed, who died
By wound that rent his panting side;
He lay, the weapon yet in hand,
His turban streaming on the sand,
While blood had dyed his mantle fold,
And bathed his face and crest of gold.

Upon that brow might yet be seen
That deadly frown, and haughty mien;
That form that passed so proudly by
In battle's heat, to soldier's eye,
In blood, and dust, and darkness lies,
As low as those he dared despise.
'T was thus the Persian reign was changed,
'T was thus Zuleyda was avenged.
I turned in rage my courser's head,
I passed, I trampled on the dead
In vengeance still, though life had fled;
So deep is now, was then, that hate
That death itself could scarce abate.
Strange that such feast of blood should please:
In other hours, alas! than these,
My sickening heart would turn away
With dread, from where the dying lay.
But pause—and could such thing as this,
No hour no future hope of bliss,
Who bends beneath its weight of woes,
Then weep the vengeance of our foes.
Go in the forest, mark the trees
By lightning struck, or torn by breeze;
Go in the valley, mark the flowers
On which the blighting simoom lowers;
All these have more of hope than me,
Like lonely bark on stormy sea,

Before the ocean's boundless wave
Not long the shattering planks shall brave.
Behind that fairy shore, alas !
That prow has left no more to pass :
Thus he who launched me from the shore
Where lay my bark of life before,
Far from the land of happiness,
To stem an ocean of distress,
Could claim no mercy, though the word
Upon his dying lips was heard.
What, ask for mercy, while his hand
Yet grasped in pride the spotted brand ?
He ask for mercy ! though she fell
Beneath his steel in Assan's dell,
Her blood shall have in blood its price,
I waved my blade, I pierced him thrice.
His pages starting as he cried,
But mark their monarch as he died ;
Yet follow not my steed or me—
Though torn and wounded, slow we flee.

XLV.

'T was said, and it is whispered yet,
That when that sun at evening set,
A spirit riding as the blast
On coal-black steed came dashing past,

And, waving far an ataghan
Of living fire, rushed by their Khan.
Avenging angel of his doom,
He slew, and bore him to his tomb !
But one, the same their sire and birth,
The corpse uplifted from the earth ;
His weapon struck the quivering dead,
He held on high the lifeless head !
They shouted to the horrid deed,
So worthy of his race and creed,—
“ As perished he, thus perish all
Who trample on the rights of man,”—
Thus fell the conqueror, Kouli Khan.

XLVI.

The deed was done—the bloody deed,
His fate in evil hour decreed ;
He fell beneath a foeman's brand,
Insulted by a brother's hand.
A mighty king at morning hour,—
At eve, a corpse without the power
To stop those very slaves who shrunk
His glance, from trampling on that trunk,
Which lies were passed his life away,
For freedom's scorn, and vulture's prey.
There as it meets the pilgrim's eye,
Perchance a passing thought or sigh,

May wake upon the hapless man ;
But if he think of Kouli Khan,
His quick'ning steps in horror flee
The grave of one so curs'd as he ;
And leave that last remains of crime,
Untouched by aught save hands of time.

XLVII.

I sought my native land again ;
The mountain snow, the desert plain
Were passed with scarcely wearying speed,
Till death bereft me of my steed ;
He bore me many a hundred league,
At last, exhausted by fatigue,
He died beside a mountain lake,
Too tardy reached his thirst to slake.
I wept—the only living thing
Whose love on earth to me would cling,
Was gone ; 'twas but a horse, indeed,
But oh ! it was a gallant steed
For fire, and restlessness, and speed—
To me in flight, or battle true,
One only lord it owned and knew.
A wanderer in the wilderness,
Exchanged with me his tattered dress,
Thus I again my road pursued,
O'er loveliest path and solitude,

And near unseen by eyes of men,
Again I reach thee, Daghistan.

XLVIII.

I cannot tell of all I felt,
When yonder chain before me rose,
Which girds thy nation as a belt,
And frowns with everlasting snows.
'T is like the rays of hope departed,
That sometimes dart athwart a dream,
To leave the sleeper broken-hearted,
When wakened by the morning beam ;
For I was happy then, and now
What am I but a shape of clay,
With welcome death upon my brow,
A faded thing of yesterday?
Yes! often in yon rude abode,
When far from prize or combat won,
Deep in its wilderness I rode,
To mark at eve the setting sun :
Yes! oft above the Caspian wave,
In silence I have sat and mused
On what would pass beyond the grave,
Calmed by the freshness, night diffused :
Ah! little thought I then, alas!
What mingled shower of joy and woe,
O'er me like ocean tide should pass,
Ere age had chilled my spirit's glow.

Few are my years, yet these I ween,
Though fleet, they've passed as battle steed;
More change, more deeds of fire have seen,
Than those who, like to shattered reed,
Beneath their weight of years are bowed :
The longest life is not the one
Whose days, like silent stream have flowed,
Though huge the mass of waters gone:
But that is long whose days have dashed
With waves that eddy to the shock,
Far o'er the land their whiteness washed,
As leaping down from rock to rock,—
Thus he who gazing in his soul
Can look again o'er deed and deed,
Though few the years have rolled, shall roll,
Has passed a life of length in speed.

* * * * *

XLIX.

This, father, is my tale, but hear.
Nay! pity not, I ask no tear;
One hath dimmed my mortal eye,
When I marked her spirit fly,
When my earthly hope was trod,
Like the blossom on the sod.
Father! when thy prayers arise
High like incense to the skies,

Ask for me no earthly boon,
She is gone—I meet her soon—
She, the only stay and girth
Bound me yet, to smiling earth.
She is gone! but whither, where?
Start not wildly, thus despair!
She is now, where is the flower,
Bloomed and faded in an hour.
She has passed, where pass we must,
She has passed, they say to dust;
But it is a tale they tell,
Told by prophet, dark and fell,
For there dwelt a soul within,
Pure and innocent of sin.
Start not, frown not, nay, nor deem
That it is a sceptic's dream;
I have sought a nearer sight
Of the Spirit, high and bright,
In the lonely forest dell,
When the leaves of autumn fell,
On the mountain's taintless snow,
With the heavy clouds below,
By the torrent's whitening foam,
By the eagle's rocky home.
Nature shewed me still the hand,
Far o'er skies, and wave, and land,

Left on every work the trace,
Or of beauty or of grace.
I have marked that word, that name,
Still in benignity the same,
And can we think the fairest thing
That wave can waft, or earth can bring,
Is soulless as the fragile flowers
That bloom in Eden's lovely bowers?
No! let the fanatic go deem
They are but phantoms of our dream,
And close to all, save such as he,
The gates of heaven's eternity.
No, father! in her dark black eyes
Was something spoke of paradise,
Her glance had something so divine,
A soul—I know it ravished mine;
Through all it wildly, brightly shone,
More brilliant than the prophet's own.
Her voice was music to mine ear,
Like that the fabled Houris hear,
The wind-harp's tone, the wind-harp's sigh,
Were mute to that in melody.
And this they say must pass away,
When death has loosed that mortal clay:
It cannot be! one look denied
The creed that said such spirit died:

And if the prophet's self or race
Have found above a brighter place,
Then could that soul of loveliness
Have sighed like wind to nothingness?

L.

“ If thou art son of faithful creed,
Tremble at thy fearful deed;
Pause, thy thoughtless lips, defiled,
On the prophet's law have smiled;
Tremble now, thy moments roll
To their last, their awful goal.
Few the days that fate has cast,
So deep the whirl of passions blast,
These that never pass again,
These thy doubting lips would stain,
These thy lips would blacken still,
Yet with darkening load of ill;
For that lip in scorn denies
Prophet, fate, and paradise.
Not that brow that knits in ire,
Not that angry glance of fire
Darting from thy raven eye,
Will avail thee ought on high;
Tremble ! for the Prophet's word,
Is sharper than the fiery sword:

Pause, Al Sirat's bridge will quake,
If from him one murmur break ;
Pause, the fears of Eblis' throne,
Half, to such as we, are known,
These thy sceptic mind shall own
When the waves of sulphur roll
O'er that agonizing soul:
Oh ! my son, to friendship's voice
Take thy long, eternal choice ;
Love, whose empire wildly reigns,
Oft in young and fiery veins,
May have led in passion's day,
Far thine erring steps astray ;
But the hour of calm is here,
Life is fleeting, death is near,
You have loved her well I deem,
Love is but a wavering beam,
Lights our short and varying dream,
Love must breathe its parting breath
With the form that fades in death :
Yet for love thy lips deny
All that brightly rules on high !
And those prophet words which say,
Woman, with her house of clay,
Dies, and withers to decay !
Ah ! my son, and would'st thou see
Ruin's dark and boundless sea,

How thine erring steps would flee
To the shrine of Araby !”

LI.

No, father ! not such words as thine
Can soothe the bleeding heart like mine ;
Thy holy writ, thy Koran's verse
Can only claim a deeper curse ;
When the last bright ray that shone,
When the sun of hope has flown ;—
Not the words of hope and fear,
Priestcraft pours in faithful ear—
Soothe the sorrow or the tear.
Ah ! the love like hers and mine,
Breathed of something so divine :
If its glow as warm could last,
When that form that answered passed :—
Can it, shall it dare not crave
Hope of aught beyond the grave ?
Go ! in the calm unbending mind,
The Arab's words a place may find :
For me—my soul would rather share
With her, the nothingness of air,
Than roam a phantom of distress
Amid a scene of happiness.
I want but her—her beaming eyes,
To make the waste a paradise ;

And something truer than the word
From frail and earthly prophet heard,
Now whispers we shall meet again—
I care not how—I know not when ;
And time shall tell—I ask not where,
But be it ocean, earth, or air,
So that my heart is pressed on thine—
So that thy lips but smile on mine :
And now, my earthly race is done—
In sorrow ended, as begun.
The child of passion I have lived—
I die the thing that none have grieved :
The blast may tear the lonely reed—
What heeds the world that withered weed !
And such am I, the wasting flame,
This shattered wreck hath left my frame.
It is about an hour ago,
I felt, perhaps, some slight relief
To gaze on scenes of joy and woe,
And feel my term of life was brief :
I passed in silence, not a star
In brightness gemmed the veil of night ;
I heard the waters rush afar,
The same, they marked the Persian's flight :
And what are they ?—and what am I ?
Those thousands, that by yonder stream
Have met in conflict fearfully ?
All gone, and faded as a dream.

And I was happy then—alas !
How strange ! those hours when man can smile,
So swift must fade away and pass
For years of misery and guile.
I passed ; the rock and caverned ground
Awaked at midnight by my tread,
Moaned forth with mute and hollow sound,
As trod my footsteps on the dead ;
It were, indeed, a night of fear
To all, save me ; but every cave
Now told me that the goal was near,
And brought me nearer to the grave
Of her who sleeps beneath the sod—
And oh ! if ever human form
Hath borne the image of its god,
'T was hers, that feeds the icy worm !
Afar there rose a glimmering light,
Like star or meteor on the night ;
That led the wanderer to thy cell,
To bid thee now, a long farewell :
Adieu ! and Gylong, may thy time
As far from man, and sin, and crime
Pass on, as flows in wild Kashmere,
The crystal stream unbroke and clear ;
And I have come at hour of rest,
Stranger, flying from my breast ;

Rest, nor prayer, nor food to crave,
But a guide to find her grave.
This, father, is the Sophi's tale—
The last, least happy of his race :
Yet not these woes of mine bewail
With tears that wet thy weeping face :
Nay, gird not on thy mantle's band,
Nor raise the pilgrim's staff in hand,
The lonely path I tread must be
Unseen, untrod by aught save me ;
I pr'y thee tarry here, nor follow
My wandering steps to yonder hollow :
For darkly spreads the abyss deep,
Whose height would be a fearful leap ;
Adieu ! we never meet again—
Adieu ! thy pity I disdain,
O'er tamer souls may hold its sway—
Mine lacks it not. Away !—away !
He spoke—all mute and motionless,
I saw him slowly wind away,
Till dark'ning, darker, less and less,
He turned the threat'ning rock of gray.
I had followed, but the threat that last
He whispered wildly as he past
Dismayed me ; such the tone, I knew
One step had deemed that menace true.

I would have followed had I dared—
These words my timid breast had scared.
From thence in forest, glen, or bower,
At morning, noon, or evening hour,
By moonlight's gleam, or darkness' screen,
No eye that Tartar chief has seen :
For through the cypress wood of gloom,
Beside her pale and marble tomb,
The wreaths of mournful flowers were found
Unwithered on that shaded ground,
And watered by the sparkling dew,
Unshared by cedar, tuft, or yew :
So cold and pure, that one would say,
From pity's dewy cheek came they.
The marble stone they laid above
The withered flower of blasted love,
Though fixed with deepness in the sand,
Would seem, by shattered ivy band,
As lifted by unhallowed hand,
Until the wind threw down again
That upraised column on the plain :
The pillar broad, the tomb was deep,—
Perhaps the tenants, two, that sleep :
I know in Persian tongue was traced,
Zuleyde—Mandano—scarce effaced,

For none across that grave will tread,
To wake the slumbers of the dead,
Or pass o'er each reclining head.

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NOTES
TO THE
LAST OF THE SOPHIS.

1.

“Or mark the Baba, as its pinions splash.”

The Baba is a bird, I believe, almost peculiar to Persia and its frontiers. It is of the same size as, and answers to, the wild swan in those countries. Its feathers are of a bluish grey.

2.

“Last of that lineage deemed divine.”

The ancestor of the Sophi, or Sephi family, a Doctor of Law, who supplanted the race of Tamerlane, pretended to be descended from Mahomet himself.

3.

“Those who usurped his father’s throne,
His father’s empire and his own, &c.”

“When fell my sire beneath their blade.”

Nadir Shah, afterwards the celebrated Kouli Khan, or Sultan, was merely an officer of Thamas, a prince of the line of Sophi, for

whom he fought with great success, but pretending that his services were not sufficiently rewarded, he rebelled, made his sovereign prisoner, and it is supposed, put him to death. The hero of the present tale, is the son of that unfortunate monarch.

4.

“I live or die with Daghistan.”

A tract of country in the environs of the Caspian.

5.

“For he is no son of Omar’s creed;
The tyrant has sought him, but he is flown,
And none but Ali, the Dervise will own.”

The Persians and Tartars, are for the most part Mahometans of the sect of Ali, and are therefore called heretics by the Turks, who follow the succession of Omar, and Abu Behr: their religion is more fantastic and sensual, than that of Omar—if possible. These two sects have been as implacable in their animosities, as the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, in the annals of Christianity. Kouli Khan attempted to change the established religion to that of Omar; murdering, and exercising the greatest cruelties on those who resisted the reformation—the very Ulemas, and high priests, found no more mercy than others. The Daghistan Tartars preserved unmolested, however, with their freedom, the creed of their fathers.

6.

“When he rushes with that brand,
Red with gore of many a land.”

There are few who have not heard of the conquests of Kouli Khan, who has been surnamed the Second Timur: the terror of his

name was carried beyond the Ganges, and Indus. The unconquered Usbecs, who, like the ancient Scythians, had never paid tribute before to a sovereign, were subdued, and the Turks were not only driven with loss from those territories they had pilfered, or taken by open force from his predecessors, but trembled for Bagdad, a place of as much importance in that time, as Constantinople at the present day. Yet such a leader, and men accustomed to hardships and victory, could make but little impression on that country, which the hand of nature, and the spirit of liberty, combined in defending.

7.

“He hastens to yon lone Kiosk,
Which rises by the ruined mosque.”

Kiosk, a summer-house. Mosque is well known to be the church of the Mahometans.

8.

“I bear such drugs from India rare,
As well may claim a moment’s care.”

The Dervises, as well as their religious duties, play off all the pranks played in this country by conjurors and quacks; plunging knives into their stomachs, dashing their heads against stones, swallowing red-hot coals, &c.; and selling various drugs and talismans, to which they attach the most ridiculous virtues, and in which the poor people are taught to place the most implicit confidence. Their lives, in general, are very austere, to give a higher idea of their devotion and sanctity.

9.

“Till Zerda sharply bit his ear.”

This, they say, is the method practised by the savages and Tartars,

who mount the wildest, and most ungovernable horses, without saddle or bridle. To tame their fury, they take the ear of the animal between their teeth, and tighten them according to the resistance it makes. It is to be presumed, that they sit a little firmer, or that the horses have those two members a little longer than those our European horsemen have to deal with.

10.

“Methinks it looked like her symar.”

Symar—winding-sheet.

11.

“That tottering dread, that silken bridge,
Which stands upon the abyss’s ridge,”
Whose waves in burning sulphur flow.”

The Mahometans believe, that after death, the faithful must pass the burning abyss on a bridge no wider than a silken thread. Woe to the Mussulman who has any stain upon his conscience!—not content with the narrow path they have allotted him, even that the fates shall bid quake beneath his steps. The fall is irretrievable, since it is the kingdom of Eblis, or hell, that spreads beneath him.

12.

“Circling round the golden sun,
Which the foe hath never won.”

A lion couchant, and a rising sun, are the standard of Persia. I have mentioned, towards the end of the first canto, after the defeat of the Persians, that the crest of Mandano, was a lion, and eagle plume, viz. :—

“No eagle plume, no lion crest
Was marked on living warrior’s breast.”

As the dethroned Sophi had certainly as great a right to the

sovereignty as Nadir, it is to be supposed, that he would have retained part, at least, of the arms of the empire.

13.

“Thus on it lured, as serpent’s gaze,
With magic centred in its rays,
Can draw the birds on which it preys.”

Naturalists pretend that the birds drop as if enchanted at the very gaze of the serpent, either by the fascinating power of his eye, or the infection of his breath. However this may have been contradicted, it is far from improbable, if we observe for instance, a cat, after taking a common mouse, at play with her little trembling captive ; although apparently unhurt, how she leaves it at four or five feet distance, at the same time gazing intently on her prey, but if Minette for an instant avert her eyes, the little animal again attempts its escape, to be again retaken. Probably terror is the cause of this. It is said, that man looking steadfastly on the most ferocious animal, it will be so awe struck as to be prevented attempting the slightest harm : this I have often witnessed myself, with regard to dogs and bulls ; and once a tiger, who flew violently against the bars of his cage when any one approached, but remained motionless when the eyes of any person of the company were fixed upon his, and skulked back to the furthest extremity of his den.

14.

“Yet the tophaike’s deadly flashes
Answer to his summons gave.”

Tophaike—musket.

15.

“Thou wert doomed by destiny
Mine or Azraël’s prey to be.”

Azraël, according to the creed of Mahometans, the angel of death.

16.

"Thus much mankind can court the hour,
That dawns o'er crime, when crime is power.

This, which has been the case in every stage of civilisation, and every age of mankind, requires no comment.

17.

"It is the fortieth moon—
The fortieth sun it will be soon."

The Oriental nations, like the Aborigines of America, are apt to reckon their age as well by the course of the moon as the sun.

18.

"But the hand of Zatanai
Tore her from my breast away."

Zatanai—Satan.

19.

"It was, indeed, a higher power
Withheld my arm upon that hour."

The dark creed of the Mahometans, it is well known, comprehends fatalism—our virtues and our crimes are alike the work of destiny, according to their faith.

20.

"At last I felt a vulture's tread,
Who deemed too soon that life had fled."

Improbable as it may seem, a similar circumstance occurred to General Vittoria, in South America: being obliged by some of the vicissitudes of a revolution, to take refuge in a forest, he fell into a dangerous fever, and remained some days without power of motion at the mouth of a cave—dying from thirst and hunger, he fell into a

kind of stupor, from which he was awakened by the screams of the vultures, evidently awaiting his dissolution: the first sustenance he received was from the warm blood of one of these birds, which approached too soon to feast on his half-closed eyes, &c.—Vide *Bullock's Six Months' Residence in South America*.

21.

“This Hafir and our bards of old.”

Hafir, or Hafer, the celebrated Eastern poet: he was considered an object of veneration by his countrymen—his favour was courted by the most powerful monarchs.

22.

“Simoom.”

Poisonous wind of the desert.

23.

“Although to make a third of those
Whose arms in dark rebellion rose.”

Several of the Genii, whose names I do not recollect, refused to do obeisance to Solomon, and were outlawed by God, if I might be allowed that expression. Every Eastern tale, from those of Sechezerade to the very European imitations, teem with those rebellious Genii.

24.

“Of him whose mighty hand could save
The shore of Hellas from the slave.”

Alluding to Themistocles, who, on receiving the command of an expedition, poisoned himself.

25.

"Again the Roman came with brow of gloom,
And thundered at the gates of Rome:
He saved it at a mother's prayer."

How great the contrast between the two warriors! Camillus, on leaving Rome, it is well known, turned to the ungrateful city he was quitting, and exclaimed, "Oh! ye gods! may the Romans one day require my services."—The prayer of the Athenian in the same situation was, "May my ungrateful countrymen never want my aid." Thus much for the patriotism of the two nations.

26.

"Where dark Iskander o'er the foes,
As whirlwind in the desert rose."

The battle of Arbela, or Gongamola, where Darius left three hundred thousand men on the field of battle. Incredible as this number may seem, it is well attested by the most unquestionable authorities—Arrian—Plutarch.

27.

"The spot I passed where Cyrus died,
Which tells a monarch's fratricide."

Cyrus, killed by his brother at the battle of Cunaxa: some say he was slain by the hand of Artaxerxes; others, by an Egyptian soldier, to whom the king granted the privilege of carrying a golden cock on the top of his spear.

28.

"He fell beneath his steed, who died
By wound that pierced him in his side."

* * * * *

"But one, the same their sire and birth,
The corpse uplifted from the earth."

Kouli Khan became so intolerable, both to his subjects and his own family, that he was murdered by his chief officers and relations while on a hunting party, in the year 1747.

29.

"If thou art son of faithful creed,
Tremble at thy fearful deed;
For thy scornful lip denies
Prophet, fate, and paradise,
And those Koran words which say,
Woman with her house of clay,
Fades and passes to decay."

Many of the Mussulmen believe it to be contained in the Koran.

30.

"How thy erring steps would flee
To the shrine of Araby."

Medina and Mecca, the places that witnessed the birth and interment of the Arabian Prophet, frequented by the pious Mussulmen; as Jerusalem was by the earlier Christians in the time of chivalry, and now by the Armenians, Greeks, &c.







